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# S P E E C H

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON THE

MOTION OF SIR GEORGE STRICKLAND,

FOR

THE ABOLITION

OF THE

NEGRO APPRENTICESHIP,

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 1838.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY W. E. GLADSTONE,

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND M.P. FOR NEWARK.

LONDON :

J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.

1838.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY IBOTSON AND PALMER, SAVOY STREET.

IN acceding to the request which has been made to me from various and opposite quarters to publish the following speech, or perhaps I should rather say statement, in a form as accurate as possible, I find it necessary to prefix one or two remarks.

The lateness of the hour at which it was delivered, the promiscuous and discursive nature of the allegations which it was intended to meet, and the number and variety of topics properly belonging to the subject, made it necessary to study compression wherever it could be done without the greatest injustice to my purpose. For this reason I made many references from memory while I had the originals in my hands, and in some, perhaps frequent instances, gave to my statements the appearance of being unsupported, while they were, in fact, of the most authentic description. Omissions of this description I have endeavoured partially to supply, while collecting, as faithfully as was in my power, the substance of the speech, by the aid of such necessarily brief reports as the newspapers have supplied.

Some points material to the argument on which I meant to have touched, I have treated concisely in an Appendix, and I have likewise added there some of the longer passages to which reference was made.

I am sensible that the statement must appear, to those who know how moving are some of the facts of this case, to be hard and unfeeling. It was not for brevity's sake alone that I avoided, where I could, expressions of feeling which the conduct of several parties might have elicited; but rather because I was, in the first place, sincerely anxious to avoid introducing into the case any new elements of bitterness, and, in the second, unwilling to make professions which circumstances would have rendered fairly open to suspicion. I am, however, not the less sensible that I speak and act, with reference to the negroes of the West Indies, under a solemn responsibility; and that if those who term themselves the negro's friends are indeed his only or his best friends, the West Indians, collectively and as individuals, are deeply guilty of injustice and ingratitude.



## S P E E C H, &c.

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MR. W. E. GLADSTONE said—

MR. SPEAKER,—If I regard the lateness of the hour at which we have arrived, the number of members now congregated within these walls, and eager for the decision, and my own inadequacy to fulfil the task which is before me, I utterly despair of being able to attract the attention of the House: but remembering, on the other hand, the vast and manifold interests involved in the issue of this debate, the singular course which the discussion of this evening has in general taken, until the speech of the noble lord the Secretary for the Home Department, and the fact that no one belonging to the body which stands accused before you has as yet risen to make a statement of their defence, I am encouraged to make the effort, and I trust to your favour and indulgence to bear me through. For I may indeed entreat that indulgence, in a sense far stronger than that which the request usually bears, and as I have seen you on a recent occasion listen for hours

to one at your bar pleading for a theory of constitutional rights, I am confident you will give the like opportunity to one connected with a body who are virtually at your bar, and who have to plead for much more than political rights alone : these, indeed, are involved,—their property too is involved in the vote of this House ; but what is weightier far, their character is not less involved ; for if it be true that the negro population of the West Indies is suffering under general hardship through their neglect, no words can be strong enough to describe their delinquency. Sir, when the Abolition Act of 1833 was brought forward, to his immortal honour, by the noble lord the member for North Lancashire, we who had seats in this House, and were connected with West Indian property, joined in the passing of that measure : we professed a belief that the state of slavery was an evil and a demoralising state, and a desire to be relieved from it ; we accepted a price in composition for the loss which was expected to accrue ; and if, after those professions and that acceptance, we have endeavoured to prolong its existence and its abuses under another appellation, no language can adequately characterise our baseness, and either everlasting ignominy must be upon us, or you are not justified in carrying this motion.

But I utterly and confidently deny the charge, as it affects the mass of the planters, and as it affects the mass of the apprentices. Yet, in declaring it to be without foundation, I do not ask you to accept

that assertion on my credit, but I refer you to the proof which shall follow. I am aware that I must speak under prepossessions, though I have striven with all my might against them: and I desire that no jot or tittle of weight may be given to my professions or assertions;—by the facts I will stand or fall. And oh, Sir, with what depth of desire have I longed for this day! Sore, and wearied, and irritated perhaps with the grossly exaggerated misrepresentations, and with the utter calumnies that have been in active circulation without the means of reply, how do I rejoice to meet them in free discussion before the face of the British Parliament! and I earnestly wish, that I may be enabled to avoid all language and sentiments similar to those which I have reprobated in others.

Now, Sir, the first point I have to put is one on which, if need were, I should be content to rest: we are at this moment in the midst of a parliamentary inquiry: and I say the argument is resistless against violently putting a period by legislation to that inquiry, the renewal of which was unanimously recommended by your own committee of last year. How is it possible, with that recommendation before you, to declare that we are ripe for a final adjudication? But in the abundance of arguments which present themselves to me, I shall not dwell strongly upon this point. I must, however, express my astonishment, that those very parties who first demanded a parliamentary investigation, are now,

after having had, in 1837, the opportunity of stating their case, the parties to protest against hearing the other side of the question. And is the House aware of the composition of that committee, which was appointed in 1836, and re-appointed in 1837, to examine this subject? I will read the names. They are—

Mr. T. F. Buxton,	Mr. Oswald,
Sir G. Grey,	Mr. Lushington,
Mr. O'Connell,	Mr. Thornely,
Mr. W. Gladstone,	Mr. A. Johnstone,
Mr. Baines,	Lord Sandon,
Mr. Plumptre,*	Sir J. Graham,
Mr. Labouchere,	Lord Howick.
Mr. P. Stewart,	

Very few of these are from the Conservative party. Only three are connected with West Indian property, and of these one is the hon. member for Ashburton, the brother to the hon. and learned member for the Tower Hamlets. Can any man listen to the recital of these names, and then need to be told, that if there had been a bias upon the mind of that committee, it would not have been a bias favourable to the planter?

And yet that committee had furnished a report, an unanimous report, in the year 1836, having then before its view the defects in the existing colonial laws, in which they stated,—

\* Afterwards replaced by Sir Stratford Canning.



*“ Under these circumstances, your committee feel bound to express their conviction that nothing could be more unfortunate than any occurrence which had a tendency to unsettle the minds of either class, with regard to the fixed determination of the Imperial Parliament to preserve inviolate both parts of the solemn engagement by which the services of the apprenticed labourer were secured to his employer, for a definite period, and under specified restrictions.”*

And they went further than this ; for they gave a positive opinion upon the *merits* of the apprenticeship itself.

“ Upon a general review of the evidence which they have received, they conceive that they are warranted in expressing a belief, that the system of apprenticeship *in Jamaica is working in a manner not unfavourable to the momentous change from slavery to freedom which is now going on there.*”

Next, as regards the views of Mr. Buxton. That gentleman had felt the injustice of deciding without hearing. He declared, in November last,\* “ It can hardly be expected that Parliament will pronounce its verdict until our evidence has been stated in detail, and the apprentice holders have been heard in reply.” He had further said, “ I am utterly deceived if you find one hundred men in either House, who will vote even for inquiring whether the apprenticeship ought to be abolished.” Such was, I must say, Mr. Buxton’s unbiassed opinion, with the evidence before him. It is stated that he has altered

\* Appendix A.



it more recently. I claim the authority of his former declaration. I have a high respect for his motives, and every confidence in his judgment when acting for himself, but less, I admit, when he has been thrown into the boiling caldron of agitation. The letter I have quoted is from North Repps Hall : at another hall, Exeter-hall, I am more suspicious of his opinions.

But as regards his connexion with the report of 1836, I need only say that he was present at the discussion when it was unanimously agreed upon, and that he took an active part ; and the meeting was a numerous one. My recollection of what passed on that occasion, and of expressions which were used, is extremely distinct : and although I should not think it desirable needlessly to enter into those details, I should feel it my duty to do so, if any attempt were made to question the fact, that Mr. Buxton was *bonâ fide* a concurring party to that report.

Is it not a remarkable circumstance, that of all those to whom the House delegated this momentous inquiry, not one could be found to move or second this resolution, which has been left at the mercy of strangers, and but one of fifteen members of the committee has spoken in its support.

Sir, I divide the argument on the merits of this case into two parts : the first, that which regards the relations between the planter and the negro ; the second involving those between the planter and the imperial legislature. I admit, I avow, I con-

tend, that these are questions entirely distinct ; and if a case of hardship can be made out affecting the bulk of the black population, then I think their wrongs call in the first instance for redress ; and that although the planter might, in such case, have a claim on the government for compensation ; and although I am well aware that in practice his postponing that claim till his hold on the services of the negro had been absolutely withdrawn, would in practice deprive him of the hope of obtaining for it a fair consideration, yet still, because the theory of justice requires it, I am content to depend simply upon this issue, the condition of the negro population. And if I go first in time to that branch of the argument which I have placed last in importance, it is only that I may disembarass my mind of the pecuniary question, before I proceed to argue what is most weighty and essential.

I maintain then, Sir, that there is a compact in this case. There has been much special pleading upon the term. And, indeed, it is in strictness difficult to say what compact there can be between a supreme legislature, and subject bodies or individuals ; because a compact by its definition implies that two parties are agreeing to do something which they had the power not to do ; while, on the other hand, the idea of a supreme legislature implies, that it has, in the last resort, an absolute control over all that belongs to the governed, and, consequently, they cannot give to it what it already possesses. But in

substance and in practice it is otherwise. We hear constantly, for example, of the original contract or compact between the ruler and the subject. Where is that contract written, or in what store of archives is it preserved? It is written in the nature of things; it is merely a form of expressing the essential obligatory relations which connect the parties. And so in this case; there was all the substance, there was the nearest possible approach to the form of a contract in the Abolition Act of 1833, ratified by his Majesty; it had every sanction that the proceedings of Parliament could give, and it had a yet deeper foundation on the immutable principles of justice.

As between the administration of Lord Grey and the West Indian body, the compact was clear even in form. To show this I will state, in the presence of the noble mover of the bill, who will correct me if I am inaccurate, that before the final basis of the plan of emancipation was submitted to Parliament, Lord Spencer and Lord Stanley, on the part of the government, had an interview with several gentlemen on the part of the West Indians, to whom they offered the choice of the following three alternatives, in the nature of compensation.

The first: a grant of twenty millions, with twelve years' apprenticeship.

The second: a grant of twenty millions, a loan of ten millions, and a seven years' apprenticeship.

The third: a grant of fifteen millions, a loan of ten millions, and a seven years' apprenticeship.

The West Indians preferred the first; but any gentleman will perceive, from equating these three alternatives, that in the estimation of the government, the extra five years of apprenticeship were of the value of five millions sterling, paid seven years in advance; and I advert to this for the purpose of showing, first, how specifically the apprenticeship\* bore a computed value as part and parcel of the compensation; and, secondly, that when Parliament indicated, as was believed by the noble lord, a disposition to refuse its assent to these terms, he, acting as he did with the strictest honour, felt himself bound to them, until released by the agreement of the West Indian proprietors, to accept a compensation, less, as I have shown, by five millions at seven years' advance, than that which the administration had deemed to be an equitable amount.

I will next show that the remaining term of this apprenticeship continues to bear a marketable value, by a reference to cases in my possession.

I take first the case of forty-eight negroes, whose services were purchased in December last by Mr. Spencer Mackay, a planter of Demerara, at 92*l.* sterling per head, for the residue of their time, amounting to two years and seven months. Next, that of about one hundred negroes, whose time was purchased at the same period by the government of

\* See appendix B.



British Guiana, at about 100*l.* sterling for each labourer. I request the House, in passing, to observe the very high value of effective labour in that colony: it is not the apprentice alone who has to pay dearly for its purchase.

Lastly, I quote a case, from Jamaica, dated no farther back than the 20th of January last, and announced by the last packet, in which Mr. Robert Page assigned to Mr. Joseph Gordon, as attorney for Sir Alexander Grant, the services of the Hill Side apprentices, comprising of able-bodied persons about thirty, with certain others, for 1000*l.* sterling.

Thus the House will see with what perfect confidence the West Indians are reposing on the faith of the British legislature, and with what entire unconsciousness of the charge, that the compact between them has already been made void.

And now with regard to the amount of the consideration which the West Indians received. It has been said, not only by Lord Brougham, which is of less moment, but by such persons, for example, as the Bishop of London—of whom I shall never speak but with sentiments of the highest respect and esteem—that the planters have been sufficiently compensated for the labour of the slaves by the grant of twenty millions, without the guaranteed labour of the apprenticeship. It is alleged, and commonly, that they are enormous gainers by the bargain. I deny it; but I do not complain of the insufficiency of the compensation; it was a noble and



a generous act in the Parliament to vote it. I only remind gentlemen, that although twenty millions sound as a large sum, when you come to buy up the property of whole communities, or the labour required to make it available, you must necessarily deal in large sums. I find, for example, the agricultural produce of Ireland valued at 36,000,000*l.* annually, which, at twenty-five years' purchase, would give, for the gross value of land and labour, (and both are included in the case before us,) 900,000,000*l.* The agricultural produce of England I find valued at 156,000,000*l.* annually; which, at thirty years' purchase, would similarly give 4,680,000,000*l.* The fair and real test is not the absolute but the relative magnitude of the sum, as compared with the consideration received for it.

Now, the noble lord, the member for North Lancashire, in his speech of May, 1833, valued the labour of the slaves at 30,000,000*l.* It was, however, valued by appraisement, under the assistant commissioners of compensation in 1834, at 51,000,000*l.*; and a most authentic record, namely, the averages of actual sales as ascertained by the commissioners, taken during a period of depression, namely, that from 1822 to 1830, gave a value of 45,000,000*l.* Over and above this was involved the whole amount of the lands, works, and buildings, which were dependent on the supply of labour. For this, then, it was that you gave twenty millions, paid six years in advance, with an apprenticeship to 1840.

But further, we must recollect, that the experiment of apprenticeship at the time was considered by the most eager promoters of abolition as one that would be ruinous. The noble lord, (for example,) now secretary at war, (Lord Howick,) prophesied that it would fail to secure labour. Something was of course to be allowed for that uncertainty, connected with those anticipations, nor are the West Indians to be reprobated if they have been falsified.

Now, Sir, it has been observed, that property has become marketable during the apprenticeship, and that a stimulus has been given to the cultivation, and that these causes have made the West Indies absolutely gainers by the change.

With regard to the first, the case is this:—Before the abolition of slavery, the excitement upon that subject had been such, as to throw the greatest uncertainty upon the title of West Indian property. In a state of which uncertainty was the main characteristic, it became better worth the while both of buyers and sellers to wait for some settlement of the question, than to run the enormous risks on the one hand, or incur the immense losses on the other, which would then have attended the transfer of the property. But when the Abolition Act was passed, you gave a new legal guarantee to the labour on which the planter depends; security was substituted for doubt, and estates became saleable. But at what price? We have the evidence of Mr. Miller and Mr. Oldham,\* given before the committee of

\* Questions 3798-9, 4345.

1836, to the effect that the price paid has been little beyond a number of years' purchase corresponding with the remaining term of apprenticeship. Mr. Miller was asked, with respect to an estate sold at 6,000*l.* (and which had been valued, more than twenty years back, at 60,000*l.* currency,) whether that sum was fixed on a calculation that the returns during the apprenticeship would replace it; and whether nothing was allowed for the subsequent reversion? His answer was, that it had been valued with reference to the probable returns during the apprenticeship, and that they gave little consideration to the reversion. Mr. Oldham testified that he had bought for 12,000*l.* what cost 35,000*l.*, and he was willing to be a buyer, but only at four years' purchase.

Next, with regard to the encouragement of cultivation. There is no doubt that such has been in some instances the fact: often, as respects sugar, to the injury of other products. But what was the nature of this compensation? It was money paid altogether in advance; it was paid for two things, (besides the freedom of the children,) first, the fourth part of the apprentice's working-time for six years, and next for his whole time at the end of that period. Thus, a large portion of the money was actually given six years before the equivalent for it was to be rendered. Of course the intermediate effect was release from incumbrances, and increased activity; but it was burdening the future to relieve



the present—it was as if a man in this country should raise money by anticipation, six years beforehand, for the improvement of his estate; or as if one should obtain it by *post obit* bonds; and what could possibly be more inaccurate, than to mistake an artificial stimulus of this description for stable and permanent prosperity? In point of fact, we have not yet arrived at the real solution of this question, and we shall not know with any certainty, until the apprenticeship has expired, how stands the account between the state and the planter.

But I proceed to circumstances of probability which bear upon that future solution.

I find from the evidence before the committee of 1836, that the crops were only kept up at their previous amount, when the whole interest of the compensation money\* was laid out upon them; but I have shown that a part of that money does not properly belong to the period of apprenticeship, and therefore we have here the resources of the future forestalled, in order to meet the present necessity.

I shall next give some facts, which I take on account of their lying within my own private knowledge, and tending to show in the first place the general depreciation of West Indian property, not specially connected with the Abolition Act.

The estate of Lacovia, in Jamaica, was purchased by Mr. Watt about the year 1813. It stood in his books charged with 115,000*l*. The compensation

\* Appendix C.

upon it would be about 4,200*l.*, the people being two hundred and fourteen. It was bought within the last year for 9,000*l.* by a person to whom local circumstances gave it an extra value. Here we have a disappearance of 100,000*l.*

The Campbell estates in Jamaica are termed Holland, Fishriver, and Petersville. On the death of their possessor in 1821, they were charged with legacies and annuities to the amount of 63,000*l.* They were mortgaged at the time for 81,000*l.* Assuming the whole to have been absorbed under these heads, we have a value thus indicated of 144,000*l.* The compensation upon the three did not reach 14,000*l.* The estates or shares in them have changed hands under the apprenticeship, at prices the aggregate of which is 29,000*l.*, leaving unaccounted for, the sum of 101,000*l.* I am not aware of anything in these cases which renders them exceptional.

I proceed to another case, which I believe represents West Indian property under the most favourable aspects, and which does exhibit the effect of the Abolition Law upon its value. The facts lie entirely within my own knowledge. A planter holding four estates in British Guiana estimated them, in the year 1831, at 300,000*l.* The estimate is more than justified by the fact, that in the year 1826 a moiety of two of these four estates, which were worth about one-third part of the entire 300,000*l.*, was sold for 75,000*l.*; and that the number of people, upon the whole, being one thousand three hundred and ten, is demon-



strated, by the amount of compensation actually paid for them, to have had a value as slaves, under the averages of the commissioners, amounting to 160,500*l.* ; while the lands, works, and buildings, are usually taken in British Guiana at as much more. This proprietor has received 72,400*l.* as compensation money, leaving 227,600*l.* against the estates. He would gladly agree to dispose of his interest in them after 1840 for 100,000*l.* payable at that time ; leaving a loss of 127,600*l.*, or about  $42\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the entire value. And this I believe to be in every respect an advantageous case.

Sir, I have laboured this point hard, at the risk of wearying the House, because I feel that if the West Indians had really enjoyed a gainful bargain, and this in addition to being charged with a broken engagement, that new circumstance would have added a deeper dye to the baseness of which they are accused.

And I must still make reference to the most authentic mode of proof, namely, the general returns of produce and revenue for the colonies, from their great export, that of sugar, for which there has been a tendency to sacrifice every other article.

I take accordingly the quantity of sugar imported into this country, and the Gazette average price, first in the year 1814, where the proceeds were highest ; next in the years 1816-18, after the peace ; (in both these cases the Mauritius is excluded from the returns ;) thirdly, in the years 1832-4, a period of great

depression, and the last years of slavery : and fourthly, the years 1835-7, being those of apprenticeship. They stand thus—

Year.	Quantity, in Tons.	Gazette Average Price per Cwt.	Gross Proceeds.
1st. 1814 -	196,200	73s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	£.12,484,000
2d. 1816 -	185,000	43s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	£.8,354,000
1817 -	190,400	49 8	8,850,000
1818 -	196,100	50 0	9,163,000
	3 ) 571,500	- - -	3 ) 26,367,000
Average -	190,500	- - -	£.8,789,000
3d. 1832 -	211,000	27s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	£.5,855,000
1833 -	209,000	29 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	6,196,300
1834 -	214,000	29 5	6,209,500
	3 ) 634,000	- - -	3 ) 18,351,800
	211,300	- - -	£6,117,260
4th. 1835 -	200,000	33s. 6d.	£.6,700,000
1836 -	197,000	40 10	8,045,000
1837 -	184,000	34 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	6,366,000
	3 ) 581,000	- - -	3 ) 21,111,000
Average -	193,660	- - -	£.7,037,000

If then we compare the annual proceeds under the apprenticeship, favoured as they have been by high prices, with the three last years of slavery, we have an increased return of £.920,000 annually : but if with the highest returns which the West Indies have made,

a decrease appears of £.5,447,000 : and if with the first years of the peace, a decrease of £.1,752,000.

The profits have been chiefly in the crown colonies, where legislation under the Abolition Act has been within your own control.

Jamaica has gained nothing, as appears by the following calculation.

1st. 1832	-	-	71,570 tons, at £.27 15 per ton.	
1833	-	-	62,850	- 29 13 —
1834	-	-	62,810	- 29 8 —
			<u>3) 197,230</u>	<u>3) 86 16</u>
Average	-	-	65,776 tons, at £.28 18	
			Average gross price	- - £.1,874,000.
<hr/>				
2d. 1835	-	-	57,430 tons, at £.33 10 per ton.	
1836	-	-	52,700	- 40 17 —
1837	-	-	44,200	- 34 12 —
			<u>3) 154,330</u>	<u>3) 108 19</u>
Average	-	-	51,400 tons, at £. 36 6	
			Average gross price	- - £.1,865,880.
<hr/>				

I regret to say that Antigua is also a loser, under the operation, however, wholly or partially, of natural causes, since 1834.

1832	-	-	7,160 tons.	1835	-	-	8,730 tons.
1833	-	-	6,480 —	1836	-	-	6,770 —
1834	-	-	12,850 —	1837	-	-	3,600 —
			<u>3) 26,490</u>				<u>3) 19,100</u>
Average	-	-	8,830 tons.	Average	-	-	6,360
Value	-	-	<u>£,251,655</u>	Value	-	-	<u>£.230,868</u>

And thus, Sir, having shown the amount of present returns, and the probability of future loss, I have only to add on this part of the subject, that I do not regret that loss, whatever it may eventually be. I do not complain that, bearing a share as a portion of the community, the planters should likewise make an additional and a heavy sacrifice. To emerge from such a state as that of slavery without serious loss, would be alike beyond our deserts and our anticipations, but I think it hard only, that an accusation of enormous profits should be brought when the case is likely to prove the very reverse.\*

I now approach the more essential portion of the argument. There was a compact. Has it been broken by the West Indian body, or by the Assembly of Jamaica? Sir, when the bill of 1833 was passed, Parliament itself provided a criterion for determining absolutely whether the substance of the compact had, so far as legislation was concerned, been fulfilled.

The decision was referred, by some strange error, not to an unseen and unknown committee, but to the king in council and to his administration, acting on their public responsibility! In every single case, this the appointed authority has long ago declared the conditions to have been fulfilled. But a question arises respecting the subsidiary and secondary legislation, required for carrying out the spirit of the Act. I do not seek to avoid this question, but it is a distinct one. And here I neither myself comprehend,

\* Appendix D.



nor can I undertake to vindicate, the conduct of the Assembly of Jamaica. Heartily do I wish that it were in the power of those who hold the property of the island to influence more sensibly the composition of that body, by whose acts they must be bound. I observe, however, in the first place, that the questions now raised are supplemental questions, not comprised in the Abolition Act but beyond it: and in the second, that Parliament in the last resort has the responsibility, for it retained the power of supplemental legislation in its own hands. It has retained that power in law, for in the sixteenth clause of the Abolition Act it makes no absolute surrender to the assemblies, but merely states that it cannot be exercised by the British legislature "without great inconvenience." It has retained the power in practice, because in the year 1836, when an useful law of Jamaica, denominated the Act in Aid, had been suffered to expire, Parliament interposed, and without protest, except, I believe, on the part of the then member for Bath, a bill was passed for renewing that colonial act, and thus you have laid at your own doors the responsibility, if legal abuses and defects have not been removed. Had you reserved no power of interference with details short of breaking up the entire compact, I will not now inquire whether the merits of the question might have been different.

I now proceed to the case of Jamaica, and I shall endeavour to deal with it explicitly and in good faith,



without omissions, though my memory may not enable me to gather and notice all the allegations that have been made in the entire course of this debate. I shall not refer to anonymous and unauthenticated statements, but I shall found my argument almost wholly upon the public reports of responsible officers, laid upon the table of this House, and open to exposure if their statements had been false. I should blush to follow the course of the honourable gentleman (Mr. Pease) who seconded the present motion, and who occupied the House with allegations from nameless persons, which it is wholly impossible to test. No, Sir, I had forgotten ; in his courtesy he promised me the name of his informant : vote away the apprenticeship to-night, and give me the name to-morrow morning ! Really, Sir, to advance such charges, and to expect that within a few hours of their promulgation this House is to go to a definitive vote on their uninvestigated credit, is the veriest mockery of justice that imagination can conceive.

But I thank the honourable and learned gentleman, the member for the Tower Hamlets, (Dr. Lushington,) for he, first of his whole party, seems to have disclaimed the idea of deciding this question upon rare and individual cases, and to have been struck with the idea that it was well to refer to the accredited statements which public functionaries have sent home. Sir, I agree with him ; but, from the source to which he has referred me, I will show the falseness of his conclusions : and I agree with him in another principle which he laid down, that

we are to be bound by the rule and not the exception in the conduct of the planters ; I join issue with him on the very terms which he stated, and which at the moment I took down, “ that the contract has been broken by a very large and preponderating majority of the island of Jamaica.”

First, as to the abuses in the law : they were for the most part before the committee of 1836, when it came to its unanimous report. As to those which have since come to light, they are completely met, together with the first, by the provisions of the bill now before the House. That bill, says the honourable and learned member for Dublin, (Mr. O’Connell,) goes to establish a dictatorship or a despotism in the West Indies. Sir, it is true that the provisions of the bill for the protection of the negro are most stringent : the constitutional rights of their employers are utterly set aside in the bill, to secure that great object : and I enter into no questions of political privilege, I freely waive those rights, not now for the first time, but as I have ever been ready for such a cause to do : I think that the West Indians, on every ground, but especially as non-resident proprietors, are bound to yield everything for the protection of the negro : in the substance and principle of the enactments of the bill I entirely concur : and I have a right to ask, why have we not had this legal remedy at an earlier period ? Sir, I do not hesitate to state my deliberate belief that the postponement is mainly owing to Mr. Sturge and his coadjutors.\*

\* Appendix E.

They went to the West Indies. They accepted the civilities, the hospitalities, of managers and planters : they stored up all allegations of abuse until they had reached a distant land, where it would require much time to investigate their truth. They pursued a course the very opposite of that which in common sense would be followed by men anxious only for the truth. What right had Mr. Sturge to distrust the willingness or the power of Sir Lionel Smith to investigate his allegations ? After all, it is to him that they have been referred : it is upon his report, in the shocking case of James Williams, that we rely. Why was this not done in the first instance ? why was Sir Lionel Smith, in whom perhaps, as much as in any governor of any of our colonies, temper, talent, principle, and judgment are combined, thus suspected by Mr. Sturge ? Even his politics, I believe, are akin to those of the administration. Now, had he gone to Sir Lionel Smith with the narrative of Williams, the inquiry would have been instituted, the report sent home early in the last session, and the Government would have come down with an irresistible demand for new enactments : twelve months of many difficulties and some suffering would have been avoided, but an opportunity for agitation and excitement would have been lost. So much for the case of defects in the law, which has been seriously raised in this debate with regard to Jamaica alone, and which I have thus argued affords no ground for abolishing the apprenticeship.



I pass to consider the actual condition of the apprentice population; for if the practice on the whole be good, you would scarcely punish with severity the deficiencies of the law even were they of a different order. Remember always, that the question is, whether the generality or the majority of the planters have violated the compact.

I divide the evidence into two classes: that which is *ex parte*, and that which has a public authority, or has been subjected to investigation. And with respect to the first,\* I apprehend I am justified in arguing, that the only use which can be made of it is, as a reason for inquiry: it cannot warrant a definitive vote. Upon any other principle, no man, no relation of life, can be secure. I need only then consider the authenticated statements, for the purposes of this debate, and these afford no ground of serious allegation, except in the case of Jamaica.

Now, Sir, I differ from those who have preceded me in the means I have pursued for the collection of the general effect of the evidence from the papers on your table. I am prepared to rely upon the reports of our governors and of the stipendiary magistrates. Attempts have been made to impeach the veracity of these gentlemen: yes, made by persons who themselves are not ashamed to be accusers upon anonymous or irresponsible testimony. It is said, that the magistrates receive the hospitalities of the planters; and it may be true: but the House is to recollect, that in the West Indies, dispersed as

\* Appendix F.



is the population, and the country destitute of inns, the man who refused hospitality would be regarded in the common opinion as a monster ; it is given as a matter of course, and almost a right, and not as a matter of personal favour. If, however, I grant, that from this cause there may be an influence—is there none to countervail it ? These magistrates are a body of English gentlemen ; many of them from those services which are marked by the highest sense of honour ; without West Indian interests or prejudices : but this is not all ; they are judicial officers, and yet they are not, as judicial officers should ordinarily be, exempted from the control of the executive government, but they are absolutely dependent for their subsistence on the respective governors, and dismissible at their pleasure, while the governors, I need not say, represent the administration at home, so that if there were matter of charge against them it would redound upon the imperial authorities : but there is no evidence of the kind. There have, however, been two actions against them, with unfavourable verdicts given by Jamaica juries. And here I may say, I am not favourable to the interposition of West Indian juries, as at present constituted, between the planter and the apprentice : and my honourable friend, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, can correct me if I am wrong in stating that he knows this is with me no new opinion. But let us take them as they are. Two verdicts were found against special magistrates : yet it is fair

to add, that I find, in page 133 of the Parliamentary Papers, Part V., that Mr. Colin Chisholm, a considerable proprietor and attorney, had been fined 100*l.* at the Surrey assizes for an assault on Mr. Special Justice Bourne. I could cite, on the other hand, a case of a special magistrate, who was fined seven thousand guilders, not by a jury, but by professional judges, holding their appointments from the crown, for an assault on a white person. These magistrates are not infallible : but is it to be supposed for a moment, that a body of one hundred and fifty English gentlemen could be terrified out of the discharge of their solemn duties by the results of three actions in Jamaica, one of which was favourable, while in the other two the charges were borne, and properly borne under the circumstances, by the government ? These magistrates have the freest access to the negroes : they spend their time in itinerating over the estates : they have all the means of information and the will to use it, and to their information I appeal.

We have in the Papers, Part V., a despatch of Sir Lionel Smith's, dated 8th September, 1837, conveying fifty-six inclosures, which are the last quarterly returns from fifty-five special magistrates. It did certainly appear to me, though it had not so appeared to the honourable and learned gentleman, (Dr. Lushington,) that as these reports contain for the most part specific answers to a set of twelve questions from the governor upon the state of the negroes, the

natural course was to place them in a tabular form ; and I shall now give the most important of the results, particular by particular, point by point. He has done otherwise : as he has read individual statements respecting free children who are tended by their parents alone, so I could read an account from a magistrate who states that they are neglected by their mothers, but supported by the planters ; but I shall look for general results. He boasts that he has thrice read the documents : what avails it, when his repeated perusals have only enabled him to read partial extracts which coincide with his views, and to make that general allegation respecting the effect of their evidence as a whole, which I will utterly overthrow by the process I have stated.

With hardly an exception, they testify to the good disposition of the negroes.

As respects the reciprocal feeling of employers and employed, nine only of the fifty-five report it to be otherwise than good. I deeply regret that there are nine such reports : but let us not forget the forty-six.

As respects the nine and eight hour systems, the House should know that this has been one of the great causes of bickering : I will not detain you by explaining the phrases further than to say, that they denote different distributions of the time legally exigible, of which the first is taken to be more convenient to the negro than the other. Now of the fifty-five, twenty-nine only make a special report on



this subject; and I take it for granted therefore, where they only deal in general terms, that they had no specific grievance to mention. And how are these twenty-nine subdivided? Of the twenty-nine, one says, that the eight-hour system prevails, and is not unpopular with the negroes: another, that it is falling into disuse, because the negroes have begun to dislike it: two, simply that it is in general use: and *twenty-five*, that the nine-hour system is in general use.

The next important question of grievance is, that which relates to the customary indulgences. Their withdrawal in certain cases has been made matter of serious complaint. They were not legally demandable under the Abolition Act; but I think that in equity and in kindness they were due; and I am willing to be bound by these principles, as if they had the stringency of law. The committee of 1836 reported that they were very generally given on the larger properties: I do not, however, stand on that report, and I look to the special magistrates to assure me what is the conduct of the majority. There are thirty special reports upon the point. Of these one states that they are commonly given, on condition that the negroes shall work for wages. Three state, that they are given as a consideration for extra labour. Two state, that they are generally withheld. *Twenty-four* state, that they are generally given without reserve.

Another point is, that of manumissions, on which



there is, undoubtedly, a case of hardship. I think the tribunal has been a bad one, and I deeply regret it, if the negro has been in any case paid one pound or one shilling beyond the real value of the labour he has bought out. On this subject there are nineteen or twenty special reports. Eight state that there is little desire to redeem the residue of the apprenticeship: eleven or twelve, that the negroes are too poor, or the valuations too high. But now let us look at the amount of the grievance. And here again I refer you to an authentic statement. In page 89 of Papers, Part V., you will find a return of concluded and unconcluded valuations, from the 1st November, 1836, to 31st July, 1837; the average term bought up was three years and five months, the average price 18*l.* sterling, or 29*l.* currency: a price higher, probably, than it should have been, yet not of the enormous character that has been represented, considering that the manumitted negroes are, on the whole, I apprehend, of a superior class: nor, on the other hand, have the great mass been repelled, for it appears that in these nine months one thousand and twenty valuations have been concluded, four hundred and five have remained unconcluded. Now, Sir, I do trust, that allowing for the possibility of error in units, I have dealt fairly by the House and by the merits in the manner in which I have here addressed myself to the examination of the evidence.

I pass to another important subject, that of edu-

cation. Now this has always been a sore point during West Indian discussions, and old prejudices are not easily removed; but the state of feeling undergoes daily improvement, and that improvement will, please God, continue, if it be not intercepted by the present agitation. Again I refer you to a public document: it is the report, dated Oct. 19, 1837, of Mr. La Trobe, a gentleman appointed by the present government, and not being a member of the church of England, to inquire into the state of education. I find in the eleventh page of that report,

“That active opposition to the various plans set on foot for the education of the apprentice or his children, by whatever religious denomination they may be proposed, is rarely to be met with, either on the part of the authorities or of influential individuals.”

And again,—

“It is to be admitted, that many exhibit great apathy with reference to the question, yet it is no less true that the change of public opinion on this head in the island has been such as to surprise those acquainted, for even ten years past, with the colony, and with the strength of prejudices, which the former state of things had apparently rooted in the mind of the community at large, beyond all hope of speedy eradication: and when every few months give proof of an advance in the public feeling on this head, and bring with them the hearty and liberal co-operation of many influential individuals, who, up to a recent date, comparatively, were fore-

most in opposition, there is certainly every encouragement held out to the friends of education, at home and in the island, and far more reason to wonder that so much has been already achieved, than that so much remains to be done."

I now come to the most painful portion of the case ; the abuses connected with the management of certain prisons in Jamaica. Even here I must observe it is satisfactory to find that, as in the first place, the learned gentleman has dealt only with the case of Jamaica, containing a minority of the entire apprentice population, so, with reference to the cases of cruelty, we have only to deal with a small and diminishing minority of that minority, for they refer only to those, I believe, who have been convicted under the Abolition Act. Now, Sir, let me say, that I have no apology to offer for the monstrous offences which have been detected in the workhouse of St. Anns, and, in various degrees, in a few of the other workhouses of Jamaica : but I ask again, do they affect the mass ? Do they establish a rule ? I might say, you cannot prove this : I deprecate the method of the learned gentleman, who refers to some paper from the parish of Trelawney, signed by seventy-three persons, on the subject, I believe, of labour, and on that evidence he proposes to convict the whole white population of Jamaica ; but they—no, I beg pardon, the white and coloured population of Jamaica, amount to between forty and fifty thousand. I shall, however, give you positive evidence



that the cases of these workhouses are exceptions, the evidence of Sir Lionel Smith. And let no man say that governors are ignorant. He writes from a personal inspection, which, much to his honour, he caused to be instituted into the state of the workhouses, before the mission of Captain Pringle, and before he had received the evidence of Mr. Sturge. On the 12th of June, 1837, he writes, as gentlemen will find at the 310th page of the Papers, Part IV.

“ Having lately returned from an inspection of the greater part of these buildings, I am enabled to report that, in most instances, I found them well regulated and under a careful supervision, from which the special magistrate is by no means excluded : and I have every reason to believe, from the disposition manifested by the local authorities, that I shall have no difficulty in obtaining such modifications of the existing rules, as may appear to me desirable.”

And at a later period I think he announces his further progress in the examination, without varying from the tenor of this report.

But observe, Sir, this is a question of prison discipline, not of apprentice law. The prison discipline of the West Indies may be bad : but let gentlemen remember, that this is ordinarily one of the last departments which is affected by social ameliorations. As in England persons are unwisely beginning to call workhouses by the name of prisons, so in Jamaica the district prisons are habitually called by the name of workhouses. Now are gentle-



men aware what were the sufferings and abuses detected in this country by the philanthropic Howard, no more than some half century ago? Do they know what my hon. friend Mr. Buxton published in his work on prison discipline, dated, I think, in 1818? Nay, have they read the reports of the prison inspectors but two or three years back, with regard to the gaol of Newgate? If they have, they will be slow in applying to the prisons of Jamaica a test, which those of England itself are but beginning to be able to bear.

Again, it is to be remembered, that in the cases which have attracted so much attention, there has been delinquency alleged on the part of two special magistrates. One has not been heard. One has been dismissed. He does not represent the character of the body.

But I shall now beg leave to introduce another question which the honourable and learned gentleman has altogether avoided, one however which was urged with tremendous and resistless force during the discussions on slavery, the question of punishments : one which does exhibit facts connected with the mass, and not with single cases alone, because we have periodical returns from all the magisterial districts of all the punishments inflicted, made by those who have pronounced the sentence. I refer you to page 332 of the Papers, Part V. You will there find that in the month of May, 1837, there were punished in Jamaica, males by whipping, 282 ; otherwise than

by whipping, 855 ; females 860 ; total 1,997. But by the month of August an immense improvement is exhibited : we then find males punished by whipping, 105 ; otherwise than by whipping, 585 ; females, 498 ; total 1,188 : so that there is a decrease, in three months, of nearly one-half upon the aggregate of punishments, and of nearly two-thirds upon the floggings. I regret that any should remain : yet how different is this authentic statement, for the colony, the peccant colony of Jamaica, from the representations that have been made by the opponents of the apprenticeship.

Sir, I hope that, as well as the infirmity of memory will allow, I have dealt with every allegation regarding Jamaica. I have gone fully into the case, because the greatest stress is laid upon it by the supporters of the resolution. A right honourable friend reminds me that I have not mentioned the flogging of females. But I have dealt with it in substance. In the instances where it has been proved to have occurred, it has been the grand abuse in the prison discipline : it is in itself monstrous—is a legal offence against the Abolition Act : it cannot be punished with too much severity ; and, but for the course taken by Mr. Sturge, it would have been effectually prevented long ago : but it is a question of prison discipline, not of the apprenticeship system.

Undoubtedly it was an omission in the Abolition Act—no human wisdom could foresee everything—

that when you were most properly providing an independent jurisdiction for the adjudication of questions between planter and apprentice, you did not also make provision, that the stipendiary magistrate should have an effectual control, in all respects, over the prisons to which he was to sentence offenders : yet this fault is not with the planters ; and I entreat the House to consider what would be the effect of rejecting the bill, and carrying the resolution ? The bill of the government does stop the abuse : if it be now a legal offence it may be stopped without any bill ; but if not, the resolution makes no provision whatever against it, and there is nothing to prevent its introduction into every prison in Jamaica !

Sir, I pass to the other case on which the supporters of the resolution have staked its issue, that of British Guiana. Against the other colonies allegations are not made. I think myself, therefore, justified in omitting to consider them. The honourable seconder of the motion (Mr. Pease) chose to introduce British Guiana. Truly can I say to him, "I thank thee for that word." He talked of the blue books, and stated he had read them. He must have dreamed it. I do complain of gentlemen who make reference to parliamentary documents, to which they have evidently paid no real attention. He utterly overlooked the plainest and broadest statements of those books ; and gave us instead a mass of private and wholly unauthenticated allegations,



chiefly of individual cases, which it is of course impossible to meet one by one; and I will not meet them by replies of a similar order from planters and attorneys. I shall avoid the practice which I have blamed in my opponents, and out of those very books I shall utterly confute him (unless where it has been done by my hon. friend the Under Secretary for the Colonies already) upon every point that he attempted to raise.

He raised a point upon a decrease of population, with an enormous increase of produce: a decrease which he admits he cannot prove, and an enormous increase which I can disprove. Sir, the average import of sugar from British Guiana was, in the years 1832-4,\* 41,790; in the years 1835-7, it was about 47,978 tons. There may be a slight inaccuracy in this return. It exhibits an increase of one-eighth, for which I account by the following not imaginary causes: The increased investments in works and machinery — the succession of three remarkably fine seasons — the circumstance that sugar cultivation in British Guiana has been gradually, for a series of years, supplanting every other,—and, lastly, the introduction of several thousands of additional labourers.

He complained next, that the distance to the field was taken out of the time of the negro. He seems to be quite ignorant that Lord Glenelg has long ago declared that it should be computed as a part of the time due to the master, and that Lord Glenelg

\* Appendix G.



has the power of regulating the law upon the subject as he pleases.

He complained of the treatment of the sick ; and he mentioned that upon the estate of Wales, in which those with whom I am connected are concerned—but he took away all personal point from the attack by adding, that the sickhouse there was one of the best—lamp-oil and other nauseous substances were administered to invalid negroes, to ascertain the reality of their indisposition. He had this from one of his anonymous friends, with whom I should be delighted to make acquaintance across the table of one of the committee rooms of this House. Sir, I need hardly say I have no information on this monstrous statement : but I hope the House, when they have heard what is the general treatment of the labourers of British Guiana, will think me justified for the present in disbelieving it. If the hon. gentleman shall think fit to introduce into the bill before the House a clause forbidding to administer lamp-oil to the negroes, he shall have my best assistance. But, seriously, Sir, I invite the honourable gentleman to supply me with a statement of his charges, that an immediate inquiry may be instituted. The result of that inquiry, be it what it may, shall be entirely at his service.

With regard to his general statement, I may offer in answer one which I myself received from Mr. Willis, lately a judge in British Guiana, and now advanced to an office in New South Wales by her Majesty's government, in the presence and hear-

ing of the late member for Weymouth, of the member for Leeds, and other gentlemen. He said nothing indeed of lamp-oil, but something of wine, meat, and soups provided for the sick : he stated that the practice of medical men on estates was considered to be very valuable : that there was no point in which the planters of British Guiana were more commendable than in their treatment of the sick apprentices.

And similarly with regard to the reduction of food : I know, in those cases of which I am cognisant, that the labourer receives ten pints of rice weekly, (when plantains are deficient,) which are stated to yield forty-five pounds and upwards of edible food, together with three pounds of salt fish, and several other allowances.

But I think I am justified in citing the twelfth question addressed to the fifteen stipendiary magistrates of the colony, as comprehending both these heads, and their answers ; and here, long as I have necessarily been, I am scarcely afraid of wearying the House ; the conciseness of their replies, in general, is a perfect curiosity. The question commences thus :

“Have any complaints been preferred to you during the last month, from any apprenticed labourers, respecting their clothing, food, treatment, or upon any subject ?”

And now I take the latest answers that are printed, those for February 1837. They run to this effect.\*

\* Papers IV. p. 574.

“None. None deserving of notice. None. Two—the parties were fined. No. None. None deserving of notice. None. No. No. No. One referred to the sheriff. None. None. None.”

I have made no undue selection. This is the general tenour of the reports. And is it in the face of facts like these, that upon nameless testimony gentlemen can expect a British parliament to break faith with the planters of Guiana?

And now, Sir, I take the condition of mothers, and the abandonment of the free children. And I will show, as was shown by my honourable friend (Sir G. Grey) last night, that the planters have done much more than was required of them, either by the letter or the spirit of the compact. The parents were bound to support the children, or apprentice them: they have not supported, they have not apprenticed them: but the reports of the magistrates apprise you, in answer to question fourteen, that upon every estate throughout the colony, except three, the planters, without either present or prospective equivalent, have continued to supply to the free children the whole maintenance and care which in a state of slavery they had received. But who are these three unnatural proprietors, that form the exception to the general practice? No, Sir, not even these shall be left to the honourable gentleman. The estates named are those of Best, Tuchen de Vrienden, and Vreesenhoop. Attracted by the similarity of the last name to that of Vreedenhoop, an estate belonging to Mr. Gladstone, I was induced to make



inquiry into these cases, and let the House mark the result, resting however, of course, on private information. I received a letter this day from a proprietor of the first, Tuchen de Vrienden, forwarding to me a copy of one from the manager, in which he says,—

“I can verify on oath, that the allowance of food and clothing, prescribed by law, was regularly offered for the free children, and as regularly refused.”

I apprehend he means prescribed by law for slave children. The reason of the refusal was this: the parents had been persuaded, that by accepting the allowances they would incur at least an implied obligation to bind the children as apprentices, to which they were averse.

The estate of Best, I understand, is in pecuniary difficulties, and on the verge of sequestration. The estate of Vreesenhoop is actually in sequestration, and of course the court would not allow, in the accounts, any except legal charges.

The honourable gentleman also referred to the amount of punishments; but what a strength of case have we here! When the noble lord introduced his resolutions for abolition in 1833, he referred to the case of British Guiana, to show, a register of punishments being there regularly kept, what was the amount of corporal suffering inflicted under slavery. Two hundred thousand lashes was the number which he then reported. And how stands that subject now? Why, Sir, the use of the



lash, as a stimulus to labour, has died a natural death in Guiana.\* The last five months show eleven corporal punishments upon a population of 70,000 persons, yielding an average of seven hundred lashes by the year; not, be it observed, for neglect of work, but for theft.† And yet we are to hear, in utter contempt of the demonstration afforded by this extraordinary and progressive reduction, of the failure forsooth of the apprenticeship system, and the essential vices in its principle!

I think the honourable gentleman also complained that the forty-five hours of labour, exigible by law from the apprentice, were so distributed through the week, as to render valueless the remainder of his time. Certainly the method by which this end could be attained must be curious, and I should be glad to have the receipt. But again I meet the honourable gentleman from the reports of the special magistrates. If he will look to question five, he will find that the hours of labour are almost always comprised between seven and half-past two, or half-past three: and how would the English workman rejoice if he could secure such a limitation! But further; I find by the answers to question four, that task-work is almost universally resorted to; and I ask who in his senses ever heard of a compulsory arrangement of hours for task-work, or can deem this reply

\* Papers, Part IV. p. 585.

† See Sir J. C. Smyth's Speech of Feb. 3. 1838, in the Guiana Chronicle of Feb. 5.

compatible with the accusation of the honourable gentleman?

With regard to the prisons of British Guiana, no charge has been made; but I may mention a statement received from Mr. Willis by myself, in the presence of the same gentlemen as I before mentioned. He stated to me, that the prison discipline was lax and defective, but not cruel; that precisely the same method of treatment was pursued with apprentices, and with white persons, specifying soldiers in particular; that the treadmill was not more severe than those of England; and that the white persons suffered from it considerably more than the blacks.

Lastly, Sir, with respect to wages. I rejoice to say, that the field labourer of British Guiana can earn at the rate of from three to four shillings a day. Even in Jamaica he can earn up to half a dollar. But in British Guiana it is as I have stated from my own knowledge: I would rather, however, refer you to the two last reports of magistrates on the subject, in pages 556-7 of Papers, Part IV., where they report that the negroes work for wages in the field at the rate of in one case three shillings, in the other three and ninepence, per day of ten hours.

Sir, I trust that from the reports of these gentlemen, from their public statements, liable to contradiction, and made under constant liability to dismissal, I have disposed of the charges of the honourable gentleman, and I boldly ask him, where is your case against British Guiana?

But what will you say to Sir James Carmichael Smyth? a gentleman of undoubted honesty, and not less unquestionable talents—a gentleman whose bias is in favour, and I will say excusably in favour, of the negroes upon every doubtful point. He exercises a most vigilant superintendence. He lives close to the negroes at George Town, and he invites and encourages them to resort to him with their complaints. And he it is who tells you, that the labourers of British Guiana are an orderly, a happy, an industrious, an improving population; he it is who says to you, “I challenge comparison with any county of Great Britain.”\*

But I cannot refrain from mentioning to the House two circumstances that have very recently taken place upon estates within my own private knowledge; for it is no part of my policy to suppress what tends to exhibit the amiable qualities of the negro character, as it is, I grieve to say, on the other side to conceal whatever is for the credit of the planters. On one estate, (that of Vreedenhoop,) an inundation suddenly occurred, which threatened the most serious mischief. It was Sunday morning—there was no legal claim upon them—but the labourers turned out to a man to erect a dam, and prevented the mischief.

The other is really a touching incident. I hold in my hand the Guiana Chronicle of October 11th, 1837, containing an advertisement of subscrip-

\* Speech to the Court of Policy, February 3rd, 1838. From the Guiana Chronicle, February 5th.



tions raised within the colony in aid of those collected at home last year, for the relief of the distressed Highlanders. Among the subscriptions are sums from the apprenticed labourers of twenty-two estates ; and I rejoice to say, that the largest amount is from the estate of Success, where it exceeds twelve pounds. It is affecting to see, not, I am happy to think, the poor, but the humble labourer of British Guiana, thus already mindful of his distant fellow-subjects. It shows the advancement of the negro population. But it also shows the friendly relations—the white persons on that estate are chiefly Scotchmen—subsisting between the different classes, and surely it speaks volumes against the proposition for a violent interference between them.\*

Sir, if there had been in Guiana a breach of contract by defective laws, the fault would have lain with the government ; because I believe that the whole legislative power over that colony, except in the case of taxation alone, where it is controlled by a court called the Combined Court, is in the hands of the government at home.

But I will not leave even that supposition to stand. Mr. Jeremie, in the year 1836, examined with the eye of a lynx all the colonial abolition and supplemental laws. Every man who knows his eminent abilities can appreciate that examination. Mr. Jeremie told me, before my honourable friend Mr. Buxton and others, that he thought the legisla-

\* Appendix H.



tion of British Guiana, with few and immaterial exceptions, was even then entitled to be termed adequate and satisfactory.

Now, Sir, you have heard of the authority of Mr. Buxton, and of the committee of 1836, on the abolition of the apprenticeship. But observe also, in particular, that of Sir James Carmichael Smyth. He declared, as he has been cited by the noble lord, (Lord John Russell,) on the 3rd of February last,—

“I consider the continuance of the present system until the 1st of August, 1840, as identified with the future welfare of this magnificent province.”

But add to this, that when first he heard of the agitation at home, so early as in a despatch of the 19th March, 1837, he wrote to my Lord Glenelg as follows:—

“*I assure your lordship that I should much regret and lament the doing away of the apprenticeship. I deprecate any sudden change or the abandonment of a system which, in British Guiana at any rate, so completely answers. Neither the planters nor the labourers are prepared for any immediate alteration. Of other colonies I presume not to speak nor to offer any opinion; but in British Guiana, not only the letter but the spirit of the act of parliament abolishing slavery and introducing apprentice labour have been so strictly enforced, that no act of tyranny, of cruelty, or of oppression, can take place without the speedy detection, exposure, and punishment of the person so offending.*”

And now learn, from a subsequent passage, which way, had he suffered himself to be influenced by personal motives, that influence would have tended. He subjoins :

“ In thus advocating the continuance, for the present, of a system which, to a hasty observer, may appear to be too favourable to the interests of the planter as put in opposition to those of the labourer, I beg to explain to your Lordship, that I am influenced solely by what I conceive to be the general good, and that the apprentice system (if carefully superintended in its details) appears to me to be equally necessary and advantageous to both parties. If I was susceptible of being influenced by unworthy motives, the continued opposition and ill-will I have experienced on the part of the most influential of the planters would rather have induced me to have arrived at the conclusion that the apprentice system ought to be abolished. I am, however, of a decidedly contrary opinion; the managers and the labourers are daily approximating; not only wages for additional labour are becoming more common, but fields of sugar-canes are weeded or cut down by agreement. Labour is, in fact, finding its level and its value; nothing can be going on better, and I do not think that the permanent well-being of the labourer would be accelerated by any immediate change of system. We have everything to expect from persevering in the present plan; it is impossible to foretell what mis-

chievous effects a sudden and (in my humble opinion) an uncalled-for change might produce.”

And now, Sir, I beseech the House to consider the utter impossibility of any adequate legislative preparation for the abolition of the apprenticeship in August 1838. Let me suppose, what, except for argument's sake, I regard as a purely chimerical supposition—that you could carry your resolution, and pass your bill in June. It might arrive in the West Indies by the 1st of August. We require poor laws, police laws, jury laws, electoral laws, vagrant laws, laws for prison discipline. We require at least a currency in which it may be physically possible to pay wages to the mass of the apprentice population. Do you expect that, upon the naked announcement of your will, there will in a moment spring into existence a whole harvest of legislative measures, which are permanently to fix and determine, in every colony, the social condition of a whole people? But perhaps you will say, this legislation ought not to have been postponed, and the islands must suffer for their fault. Not so, Sir : the government are responsible for it. Lord Glenelg, I apprehend, wrote thus to Sir J. C. Smyth, on December 29th, 1837.

“ It is perfectly true that to the utmost extent it is and has been the endeavour of her Majesty's government to avoid every measure which will predetermine the nature of the relations which are to subsist between employers and servants in the West



Indies after Aug. 1, 1840. *They have postponed that inquiry until the time shall arrive for viewing the question under the many different aspects in which it must be regarded when all the necessary information shall have been collected."*

Nor was this from the government alone. The committee of 1836 reported in exactly the same sense; and the right honourable gentleman, (Mr. Labouchere,) who sat as chairman of that committee, knows that I am correct in saying, this recommendation was peculiarly desired and pressed by those who are termed the friends of the negroes. And they were right. The obvious reason being, that in the prospect of so great a change, it is well to make your preparations with the advantage of the utmost possible degree of knowledge which can be gathered from the experience of the apprenticeship.

What then are you prepared to do? Will you throw all these communities into a state of anarchy? Will you cast forth the aged among the apprentices upon the world, and leave them to the mere mercy of those planters who are so much vituperated? They have no claim to relief, no means of subsistence. The Abolition Act was passed with the general, and I will say, the *bonâ fide* concurrence of the West Indian proprietary body; and yet it took two years to arrange, very imperfectly, the laws necessary for regulating a transition state of only six years' duration; and can it now be expected that all the measures which should attend emancipation can



be adjusted in an instant ; not, be it observed, with the concurrence of the West Indian body at home, but in the midst of their general and indignant protestations ?

And further, I am sure that the House will feel the necessity of observing some analogy and proportion in its method of dealing with different questions, and with the several classes of her Majesty's subjects. Compare the child of nine years old—and some say, under—entering your factories to work eight hours a day—and some say, more—for a livelihood, with the child of nine years old in British Guiana, supported without labour by the proprietors of the soil. What shall we say of the Irish peasant with his sixpence a-day ; of the handloom-weaver with his four shillings a-week ?—what shall those of us who have such poor constituents say to them, when next we go among them, and see their wasted frames stooping to their toil for twelve or fourteen hours in the day to procure a bare subsistence, when we tell them we have no aid to afford them, but that we have been busy in rescuing from his seven-and-a-half daily hours the negro of British Guiana, who can employ his extra time at the rate of three shillings and sixpence, or four shillings a-day ?

But more. Are you ignorant of the slave-trade that is now in its fullest vigour between Africa and the West ? I am credibly informed that 50,000 human beings were brought last year to a single port of South America. Have you considered how many cargoes of

them are now upon their deadly passage? Have you inquired why and how that trade is carried on? I do not mean alone that in your public negotiations you tamper with it from year to year, and rest in the feeblest and most ineffectual measures, instead of declaring that trade to be a piracy, or of letting the world know, at all events, who are the nations and the governments that prevent its being so declared: not this alone, but I ask, are not the manufacturers of this country they who supply the means of supporting this monstrous traffic? The British manufacturer sends his goods in British ships to the Brazils, and receives for them cotton, the produce of slave labour. But a portion of those goods are made for an ulterior purpose; they are adapted to the African market; they are reshipped from the Brazils to the coast of Africa, and there exchanged for the human ware that passes from Africa to Brazil.

And have you, who are so exasperated with the West Indian apprenticeship, that you will not wait two years for its natural expiration, have you inquired what responsibility lies upon every one of you, at the moment when I speak, with reference to the cultivation of cotton in America? In that country there are near three millions of slaves. You hear not from that land of the abolition—not even of the mitigation—of slavery. It is a domestic institution, and is to pass without limit, we are told, from age to age; and we, much more than they, are responsible for this enormous growth of what pur-

ports to be an eternal slavery. It is the demand which creates the supply; it has been the demand for cotton to support and extend your manufactures, under which slaves have been multiplied in America, and which has made the breeding trade in the northern slave-states, and the carrying trade towards the southern slave-states, and the vast increase of the entire servile population. You consumed forty-five millions of pounds of cotton in 1837, which proceeded from free labour; and, proceeding from slave labour, three hundred and eighteen millions of pounds! And this, while the vast regions of India afford the means of obtaining, at a cheaper rate, and by a slight original outlay to facilitate transport, all that you can require. If, Sir, the complaints against the general body of West Indians had been substantiated, I should have deemed it an unworthy artifice to attempt diverting the attention of the House from the question immediately at issue, by merely proving that other delinquencies existed in other quarters; but feeling as I do, that those charges have been overthrown in debate, I think myself entitled and bound to show how capricious are honourable gentlemen in the distribution of their sympathies among those different objects which call for their application.

And now, Sir, I have completed my long and wearisome detail, and I commit this weighty question, with the utmost confidence, to the justice of a British Parliament. I ask for justice alone, and to



that demand the legislature of England cannot be deaf. I have no fear of the effect of any of the arguments which have been used in this place; but I am aware that means of a different character have been put into requisition. All the machinery of private solicitation and intrigue has been at work, and a pressure almost intolerable has been exerted, it is probable, upon nearly every one of those who hear me. Yet I am fearless of the result. The threatened measure cannot pass here or elsewhere. You have been urged by demands, addressed to you not as members of the British Parliament, not as rational beings, but as if you were mere machines, intended simply to indicate the views of parties outside these walls. I have requested no vote, nor would I stoop to such a course; but when any gentleman has named the subject to me, I have said simply, hear the case. You are yet, in some sense, the mind and the deliberate wisdom of the nation, and you will act in the spirit of that high capacity, not in subservience to blind impulses from without, originating no doubt in benevolent motives, but founded upon information most partial, inadequate, and erroneous. If I have failed in proving that which I undertook, it has been my weakness and my shame, but it has been the misfortune of one of the strongest cases ever submitted to Parliament. I read but yesterday an article in a morning journal\* on this subject, with sentiments which I will not characterise, lest I should add one

\* The Morning Chronicle.



more to the expressions of irritation which, contrary to my will and intention, may have escaped me while I have addressed the House. The writer did not reason of justice or of humanity ; but he recited certain resolutions upon this subject, and went on to say, “These resolutions are intelligible enough ; honourable members are aware of the weight of the body from which they proceed, and require no hint from us as to the course which they ought to pursue.” Sir, I stand in the face of Parliament ; I have laid before you the facts of this case, myself bewildered by their multitude. I have laid before you considerations of policy and of statesmanlike foresight, considerations of equity and plighted faith. I will not intimate a suspicion, nor presume to entertain a doubt, as to the principle upon which members of this House will to-night regulate their conduct ; I retort the language of that scribe in a sense most opposite to his. Honourable gentlemen can require from me no hint as to the course which they ought to pursue.

Sir George Strickland said—Mr. Speaker, I think that I shall best discharge my duty by not offering one word in reply.

The House divided—

For the amendment, (that the Slavery Abolition Act	
Amendment Bill be read a second time)	269
Against it	205
Majority	64



## A P P E N D I X.

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### A.

IN justification of what was said in the speech, I subjoin larger extracts from Mr. Buxton's letter, dated Northrepps Hall, Nov. 3, 1837, most earnestly recommending the perusal of the whole document.

“I am not convinced of the propriety of making a grand effort for procuring the abolition of the apprenticeship in 1838. It seems to me an improbability of the highest order that we should succeed in such an attempt. What is our present situation? *A contract sanctioned by the legislature exists—we maintain that its conditions have been violated, and that therefore it ought to cease.*

“*Upon this matter of fact we are at issue with the West Indians, and it can hardly be expected that Parliament will pronounce its verdict until our evidence has been stated in detail, and the apprentice-holders have been heard in reply.* I observe that some of our excellent and zealous friends have expressed an invincible aversion to parliamentary committees. But I cannot suppose that Parliament will decide so grave a question, and dissolve an existing contract of its own making, without inquiry; and an inquiry in this case implies a parliamentary committee. I take it then for granted that to an investigation before Parliament we must go.

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“I have supposed that you will get committees to investigate the question, whether the contract has not been virtually dissolved by the misconduct of the planters. That I am persuaded you will never do. *I am utterly deceived if you find a hundred men in either house who will vote even for inquiring whether the apprenticeship ought to be abolished.* With these views, I venture to pronounce our failure to be certain, if we embark in the attempt ‘to secure entire freedom to the negroes in 1838.’ ”

Mr. Buxton proceeds to mention,

1. The emancipation of the non-prædials in 1838. Of this he says with truth and force,—

*“Without exposing ourselves to the charge of endeavouring to break faith, or violate the contract, we might with irresistible force demand that this part of the bargain shall be carried into execution.”*

2. Negro education.

3. Entire freedom after 1st August, 1840.

He resumes, and says,—

“I submit, then, whether it would not be better to attempt the great and practical measures to which I have alluded, than to introduce a topic which, besides failing of any beneficial effect, will divert the attention of Parliament from *measures which involve no violation of principle, are in unison with the act abolishing slavery, and would prove, if carried, of incalculable benefit to the negro.*

“Another consideration has great weight with me. It is said there is danger of tumult in the West Indies when the period arrives for the emancipation of the non-prædials. If the negroes learn that their friends in England are making a mighty effort for the abolition of the apprenticeship, they will naturally anticipate success; and their disappointment will be deplorable, and their excitement dangerous, when they learn that the hopes, in which they have been taught to indulge so confidently, have not been realised. *Anything like tumult would be laid hold of by our opponents in the West Indies; dreadful punishments would be inflicted; and the very disturbance would be construed into an argument for some restrictions upon their future liberty.* I cannot think that we should be justified in exciting hopes which must prove fallacious.



“I have thus placed before you my views upon the present crisis.”

I take my extracts from the “Patriot” newspaper of Thursday, Nov. 16.

## B.

LORD STANLEY, July 24, 1833.

(Mirror, 3301.)

“I distinctly stated when I introduced the measure, and I do not hesitate to avow it now, that I consider the period of apprenticeship to be part of the compensation to be paid the proprietor.”

*Mr. Fryer.*—“Why are we to pay anything?”

*Lord Stanley.*—“The honourable gentleman asks me a very short and a very pithy question. ‘Why are we to pay anything?’ My answer is, because the principles of justice require that we should not take away a man’s property without remunerating him for it.”

Extract from a despatch of Lord Glenelg to the Marquis of Sligo, dated Downing Street, 31 *March*, 1836; and by the latter communicated to the House of Assembly of Jamaica on the 24th May.

“The abolition of slavery, and the subordinate measures required to render it effectual, present a course of events altogether peculiar and anomalous.

“That great act was nothing less than a national compact, of which Parliament was at once the author and the guarantee. Binding the people of the United Kingdom to the payment of a grant of unequalled magnitude, it also bound the emancipated slaves to contribute compulsory labour for several successive years, while it imposed upon the Assemblies the obligation of reconciling by proper laws the duties of the negro population, as apprenticed labourers, with their rights as free men.

“On the part of the British treasury, as on that of the emancipated slaves, the agreement has been carried into complete execution.

“ It follows, Parliament is therefore at once entitled and bound to enforce by its power the performance of any part of the duty of the Assembly of Jamaica towards the apprenticed labourers which that body may themselves have failed to fulfil.”

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## C.

## REPORT OF 1836.

1. Question 5397. Mr. Jones paid about 88*l.* sterling for extra labour, or, according to question 5378, 128*l.*: he had 400 apprentices: his cultivation fell off by one-third. The interest on his whole compensation money at four per cent. would be from 310*l.* to 320*l.*

2. Question 3556. Mr. Miller paid about 150*l.* sterling for extra labour. Had 320 apprentices. Interest on the whole compensation money would be about 256*l.* His crop fell off by one tenth.

3. Question 4581, 4820, 4888, 4902. Mr. Oldham had under 4,000 apprentices. He had paid 7,000*l.* currency, or about 4,500*l.* sterling, in a year, for extra labour. He kept up his crops. But the interest of the whole compensation money would be, at four per cent., little over 3,000*l.* sterling.

4. Question 5037 et seq. Mr. Shirley paid the whole interest of the compensation money, and made the same crops.

To charge the old colonial interest of six per cent. would of course change the aspect of these calculations; but what planter could now command such an investment on adequate security?

It seems certainly not too much to say, that one half of the compensation money must be regarded as given for the time of the free children in 1834, and that of the adults from 1840. The apprenticeship in this view should, strictly speaking, be credited only with one moiety of the interest, and the remainder should be regarded as an accumulating fund, to meet the increased expenses of the approaching period of absolute freedom.

## D.

In order to complete that part of the argument which regards the account between the State of Great Britain and the planters, it is highly requisite to take into view such probable evidence as is already within our reach, having reference to that, now not distant, period, when the emancipation will be brought finally to the test of experience.

There are two questions for consideration : the first whether the negroes will be willing to work habitually, continuously, and generally, in West Indian agriculture : the second, whether the planters will be able to pay them such wages as, supposing there is a degree of inducement which would suffice, will lead them to continue the present cultivation.

As regards the first, the balance of probabilities, however subject to doubt, appears to be in its favour. The circumstances which throw uncertainty upon it are, in some but I trust few cases, the want of good feeling between the labouring class and those set over them ; the progress of the free children towards maturity without their being trained to industrial pursuits, or, in a considerable number of instances, by any religious education ; the facility with which it is likely they may be able to obtain patches, or what have been called pocket-handkerchiefs, of land ; and the fact that the manumitted field-labourers do not return to that employment after emancipation in the apprentice colonies.

But, upon the other hand, their abandonment of that occupation may be owing to the demi-servile associations which attend it : while apprenticed, they appear always willing to work in their extra time, and commonly for wages at field or manufacturing labour ; and although the cases of Bermuda and the Bahamas are quite irrelevant, there is also some encouragement in the case of Antigua.

That island\* differs from nearly all the other West Indian colonies in the cheapness of labour, the comparatively high cost of maintenance, which is by imported food, the general appropriation of the available land, a larger portion of resident proprietors, a po-

\* See "Jamaica under the Apprenticeship System," by Lord Sligo, p. 107.

pulation whose spiritual interests have been more extensively cultivated, and in the absence of religious discord.

Still, had there been that general and invincible repugnance to field labour on the part of the negro which was once presumed, would not the emancipation have been followed by a systematic and determined strike, and that, in turn, by a disposition on the part of the poorer proprietors to break up their lands into small allotments, as has, I understand, been the case to some extent in Jamaica?

It is difficult to say whether or how far the decline in the crops of Antigua is chargeable upon the abolition of coerced labour.

The second question is more formidable. The East Indian competition must, one should suppose, now that the duties are equalized, be found to exercise a most depressing influence, within no very long period of time, on the prosperity of the West Indian colonies, as countries exporting sugar. It does not appear how the prices at which Bengal can supply our market, will suffer the West Indian planter to offer such wages to the negroes, then a free peasantry, as should divert them from their plots of ground to a more steady and laborious cultivation, however far it may be from real severity of toil, and however he may be aided by the plough, and by rattooning, and by that great reduction in the expenditure connected with the management of estates which will probably attend the increased need of economy.

The importations from the East Indies have been as follows during the years which have followed the passing of the Abolition Act:—

1834	-	-	4,800 tons
1835	-	-	5,500 tons
1836	-	-	7,800 tons
1837	-	-	17,000 tons.

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## E.

On Mr. Sturge's retention of the statements which he had obtained in Jamaica, Lord Glenelg thus writes to Sir Lionel Smith, in a despatch dated 1st February, 1838, and to be found at page 264 of the Papers, Part V.



“ I confess I deeply regret that the circumstances which have led to the present inquiry, instead of having been brought under the notice of her Majesty’s government for the first time in a pamphlet printed and circulated in this country, were not fully stated to you in Jamaica when they first came to the knowledge of the parties, through whom they have at last happily transpired. Had this course been adopted, the dismissal of Mr. Rawlinson would have taken place at a much earlier period, and the authentic statement of the written disclosures, contained in the evidence now before me, would long since have supplied a motive and laid a foundation for a more complete remedy than it has yet been in the power of the government to provide against the recurrence of such enormous abuses.”

And Sir Lionel Smith writes, dating 16 July, 1837, (see p. 271 of the same papers,)

“ It would be puerile in me to complain of the want of personal courtesy in Joseph Sturge, but I do complain of his want of confidence in me to put him in the way of the best information.

“ I should have felt obliged to Joseph Sturge if he had told me of any abuses he had discovered in our system towards the apprentices.”

## F.

In illustration of the natural liability of all *ex parte* statements to the grossest exaggerations, I cannot avoid quoting the following passage from the Times of Feb. 27.

“ Lord Brougham was certain, that if he had found amongst the records of cruelty in the colonies a passage like the present—if he had found that children of four, five, and seven years of age, answering to six, seven, and nine in this cold climate, had been sentenced to years of solitary confinement, under the authority of a colonial secretary, or under the authority of those appointed by and responsible to him—if he had found that children of those tender years had been shut up for months and years in solitude, *he could not have found a climax more appropriate* for his closing appeal, in the narration of cruelty which he had given to the House; but there was nothing so bad as the present case in the records of West India Slavery.”

This referred to three female children in Milbank Penitentiary. I had seen them within a day or two of the speech, cheerful, well behaved, remarkably healthy in appearance, and without the slightest disposition to complain. A Committee of the House of Lords has since investigated the allegations, and found them wholly destitute of truth. But if fiction can grow into such magnitude in traversing the short mile which separates the Penitentiary from the Houses of Parliament, how can *ex parte* statements imported from the West Indies be received without hesitation, or acted upon by conscientious persons without inquiry ?

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#### APPENDIX G.

*The return in my possession (from Messrs Corrie & Co. Mincing Lane) is as follows :*

DEMERARA.				BERBICE.			
Year.	Great Britain.	Ireland.	Total.	Year.	Great Britain.	Ireland.	Total.
1832	34,060	2,760	36,820	1832	6,870		6,870
1833	34,850	2,650	37,700	1833	4,670	410	5,080
1834	30,510	3,850	34,360	1834	4,200	340	4,540
1835	34,260	3,750	38,010	1835	6,300	20	6,320
1836	38,520	4,680	43,200	1836	10,260	420	10,680
1837	33,600			1837	7,800		

It will be perceived that I have not got the Irish return for 1837. I assume it to bear the same proportion as the British to that of 1836. This will give about 4,000 tons for Demerara, and 325 tons for Berbice.

1832—4	{	From Demerara	108,880 tons.
		From Berbice	16,490
			<hr/>
		3)	125,370
			<hr/>
			41,790 tons.

1835—7	{	From Demerara	118,810 tons.
		From Berbice	25,125
			<hr/>
		3)143,935	
			<hr/>
			47,978 tons.

## K.

I had wished to call the attention of the House to the apparent fact, that however unsatisfactory our West Indian history, and under all present disadvantages, still the relations between whites and blacks in those colonies seem less incapable of permanent rectification than those between the analogous classes in the United States, or in other colonies of European nations, or even than those which exist between our own colonists and the respective aborigines in some other quarters.

Utterly denying that intellectual culture and civilised habits will ensure the permanent elevation and happiness of men, I yet believe that all his faculties are meant to be developed in unison for his perfect well-being ; and looking to such information as we have respecting Saint Domingo or Hayti, and Liberia, I think it is not too much to say, that the social fusion of the two races is of the highest importance in the case before us.

It is clear that a milder and more christian sentiment begins to prevail among the dominant class. The late Mr. Froude observes early in the year 1834, that the general body of the planters had “ eaten dirt,”\* admitted the time for emancipation to be come, and

\* Froude's Remains, vol. i. pp. 346—3.

no longer protested against the imputations thrown upon the state of slavery. And again, in the island of Barbadoes, Mr. Hart, a Missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, became unpopular and was complained of, some ten years back, for admitting a black to the Holy Communion in company with whites. But writes Mr. Froude in January 1834,\* “ Last Sunday, when I received the Sacrament at his church, at which near 200 people were present, all colours were mixed indiscriminately.”

If there be a general progression of this kind, and a sincere recognition of religious brotherhood, we may hope to see wrought out a final harmony and amalgamation between races hitherto never combined, except upon terms shameful to one and deteriorating to both.

\* Ibid. p. 335.

#### ERRATUM.

Page 9, line 2, *for seven years, read twelve years.*

LONDON :

IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.









